

## BREACH OF THE CODE OF PRACTICE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS

This document reports a breach of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, or the relevant Pre-release Access to Official Statistics Orders, to which the Code applies as if it included these orders.

### 1. Background information

Name of Statistical Output (including weblink to the relevant output or 'landing page')

Annual Population Survey: UK Armed Forces Veterans, 2014

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/annual-population-survey-uk-armed-forces-veterans-residing-in-great-britain-2014>

Name of Producer Organisation

Ministry of Defence (MOD)

Name and contact details of the statistical Head of Profession (Lead Official in an Arm's Length Body) submitting this report, and date of report

Chief Statistician  
Ministry of Defence  
Main Building | Whitehall  
London | SW1A 2HB  
Tel: 020 7218 1466  
E-mail : [DefStrat-Stat-ChiefStatistician@mod.uk](mailto:DefStrat-Stat-ChiefStatistician@mod.uk)

### 2. Circumstances of breach

Relevant Principle/Protocol and Practice

Principle 1, Practice 4: Publish statistical reports according to a published timetable that takes account of user needs.

Protocol 2 Practice 8: Ensure that no indication of the substance of a statistical report is made public, or given to the media or any other party not recorded as eligible for access before publication. Report to the National Statistician immediately any accidental or wrongful release, and investigate the circumstances.

Date of occurrence

07 April 2016

Nature of breach (including links with previous breaches, if any)

1. The report was not published as stated in the pre-release announcement.
2. Two instances of government colleagues with pre-release access sharing with colleagues not on the list.

Reasons for breach

A quality assurance issue was identified by a colleague during pre-release access so the publication was stopped. Public users were informed of the delay on the day of release but after the 09.30 planned publication time. This release was the first release using new variables available in the Annual Population Survey (APS). The quality assurance issue was not an error in the calculated data but around treatment of missing survey data. ONS survey methodology was consulted and a more sophisticated method was used to impute for missing data – this changed the headline estimates.

A communications officer in MOD with pre-release access forwarded a briefing document (which contained some statistics) to another communications officer within MOD who was not on the pre-release access list. The recipient was in fact out of office and deleted the e-mail the following morning when contacted.

A Scottish Government policy colleague with pre-release access forwarded the report to two colleagues without pre-release access. This was noticed immediately by the overseeing Scottish statistics lead. The two individuals concerned were out of office and deleted the e-mail on their return the following day.

### **3. Reactions and impact (both within the producer body and outside)**

No reaction to the delayed release.  
Both pre-release access breaches were contained within Government.

### **4. Corrective actions taken to prevent reoccurrence of such a breach (include short-term actions, and long-term changes made to procedures)**

Internal MOD users were notified of the delay. The .GOV.UK calendar was changed as soon as possible on the morning of the day of release and the reason for the delay was provided.

Longer term: Additional Quality Assurance has been built into this release and ONS methods will be consulted early on potential survey methods issues. MOD has since carried out quality assurance audit of all releases, identified high risk issues and agreed implementation plans with lead statisticians.

The pre-release statement contained in the pre-release email was already strong:  
“Verbal briefings are being introduced to make sure that individuals are fully aware that publications received via pre-release are to be seen by named recipients only.

As a named recipient, you **must not** forward or otherwise disclose the contents of a publication to anyone who is not on the list, nor should the contents be used or quoted in

any other documents, externally or internally, **before 9.30am on the date of release.**

Such disclosure constitutes a **breach** of the Official Statistics protocols in the Code of Practice for which the Department is held to account by the UK Statistics Authority. Any breaches may result in the withdrawal by Defence Statistics of pre-release access to future publications.

You will be contacted shortly by the responsible statistician or a member of their team to clarify this process and answer any questions you may have.”

The Scottish Government lead has re-briefed those with access to ensure no further misunderstandings.

MOD has since developed and published a manual of directives and guidance on use of the Code in MOD - this has been promoted through workshops. This includes pre-release access practices, standard email warnings and what to do in the case of a breach.

There was no breach in the subsequent release.

#### **5. Links to published statements about this breach**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/announcements/uk-armed-forces-veterans-annual-population-survey>

#### **6. Any other relevant supporting material**

N/A